

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## Overview:

The United States government is addressing humanitarian, political and economic development considerations as part of its civilian preparations to help restore a democratic form of government of Haiti. The U.S. Agency for International Development's newly established Office of Transition Initiatives (OTI) is playing a central role in this effort. In September 1994, OTI launched the Communal Governance Program (COP), along with a companion project to demobilize and retrain Haitian military and police. Both activities are being implemented through a grant agreement with the International Organization for Migration (IOM).

COP was authorized to provide rapid, time-limited and visible assistance to help restore democratically elected government and encourage Haitians to move from an environment of intimidation towards a process of popular participation. The program is utilizing a decentralized implementation process in order to be responsive to local populations, especially in rural areas. Its participatory approach to community discussions helps citizens and their elected officials determine priorities and make decisions on how to better their lives. To provide tangible benefits in such an impoverished country, CGP is funding and managing numerous micro-projects and activities.

Management Systems International (MSI) was contracted to evaluate CGP. It assembled a four-member team with extensive United States Agency for International Development (USAID) experience in managing and evaluating projects as well as on-the-ground experience in Haiti. During the team's January - February 1996 visit, it collaborated with three Haitian social scientists, IOM's evaluation chief, and two USAID staff members to conduct the evaluation which employed a multi-disciplinary approach and extensive field interviews.

## Evaluation Findings:

### Democratization

While the restoration of a democratically elected government was brought about primarily by the arrival of foreign troops as part of a larger diplomatic effort, COP contributed to the democratization process by quickly moving into a new political space and providing badly needed material resources to enable local organizations to begin improving their communities. CGP empowered local organizations to address development problems in very concrete ways.

CGP is providing a means for Haitians to express themselves freely both with one another and with their local representatives. This is resulting in local officials being more responsive to their constituents in determining priorities and the allocation of program funds. CGP is also serving to facilitate the decentralization of government by working directly with local community groups and locally elected officials. Aided by IOM's effective management, CGP has injected transparency and accountability into programs and transactions involving the use of community resources. Despite some

initial and well justified scepticism, CGP has started an important process to rebuild confidence in local government and lay the foundation for other democratization activities by USAID and other donors.

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## Outreach

OTI and IOM are achieving the remarkable feat of providing highly valued project assistance to all regions of Haiti and to 113 of the country's 133 communes or counties. CGP has engaged more than 2,000 community groups representing some 50,000 Haitians throughout the country. Although earlier USAID projects had achieved similar geographical spread, COP has been unusual in the variety of projects which it has funded and the speed with which it has moved. The goals of rapid action and high visibility are being fully achieved by the project.

## Beneficiaries

Popular reaction to CGP micro-projects, particularly Phase I activities (schools, roads, water) is highly positive. COP is uniformly praised for a) the rapidity with which it responds to proposals; b) absence of hidden personal or political criteria in micro-project approval; and c) its full compliance with its part of all agreements. The micro-projects selected also benefit women and men equally, with children as major beneficiaries of COP activities. The evaluation team did note, however, a limited skewing of micro-project locations in some urban versus rural sites and along roads or accessible tracks. This was viewed as unintended and more related to practical management and time considerations. While there had been concern about the possibility of disproportionate use of resources based on political or other factors, no evidence was found to show such use.

## Collaboration with Multinational Forces

A key ingredient in this project is the close cooperation with the U.S. and other foreign military. From the initial planning stages in Washington, D.C. to the on-the-ground operational period, OTI and IOM worked to coordinate their efforts with the military. This collaboration, which was greatly facilitated by the rapid and successful completion of the military's primary mission, is resulting in both the military and civilian counterparts benefiting from sharing expertise and complementing one another's efforts. CGP is especially profiting from the security umbrella as well as the greater logistical and transportation resources of the military.

## Management

Following some preliminary uncertainty about project design and objectives and problems with hiring and training field staff, IOM developed a well organized management structure, involving micro-project approval procedures, administrative guidelines, documentation mechanisms and an impressive data base for all activities. OTI/IOM quickly mobilized international and Haitian staff to open field offices

nationwide and initiate operations swiftly.

## Transition

Because of the inherently short-term nature of OTI activities, CGP will now terminate at the end of 1996. Another extension is not being planned. The challenge for USAID is to build on the COP successes and facilitate the transition of certain functions to other USAID, Haitian and/or donor activities. For example, the Communal Improvement Committees are a temporary mechanism set (End p viii)

up under the COP to involve local officials in decisions about the use of funds. Once elections take place for local assemblies, these committees may disband. The experience with such local representative groups, however, should not be lost and should be included in the planning and implementation of future bilateral USAID and international agency projects. Particularly when there is an extension of Phase II of this program, the added experience gained by these committees in preparing acceptable proposals for funding by Haitian or other donors is a valuable resource for the further development of local government.

## Lessons Learned

- USAID is to be commended for making the needed adjustments to respond rapidly in Haiti. Its interventions would probably not be feasible for a more typical in-country Mission or where there is no resident Mission.

- Although OTI should be encouraged to integrate more of its operations with other parts of USAID (and they with OTI), including the in-country Mission, it deserves particular recognition for the success of this project.

- The “notwithstanding” authority in the use of its special funding gives OTI an important advantage in speed and flexibility which should be used elsewhere to deliver development assistance. In exercising this prerogative, however, OTI should vigorously strive to incorporate into its program more of the sound development criteria and management practices of some of USAID’s traditional operations.

- The feasibility and utility of military and civilian cooperation in assistance activities was well demonstrated. The military provided transportation and other logistic support to OTI/IOM projects. The security offered to civilian counterparts by the mere presence of military in the region was vitally important. Such assistance may be essential in similar circumstances before development activities can really get underway and have an impact. U.S. Special Forces and Civil Affairs units were helped by the financial resources and on-the-ground knowledge provided by the USAID/IOM staff. Such linkages can and should be pursued in other settings where both civilian and military personnel are present.

- The well received switch from an emphasis on civic education to one based on small projects contains a generic lesson. Democratization efforts staged in an impoverished setting such as Haiti are effectively pursued through concrete and adequately funded activities yielding tangible benefits.

- Under conditions of institutional chaos, COP also demonstrates that it is both possible and desirable for US AID assistance programs to design delivery systems that provide external resources to local communities without passing through the normal channels of the host government. Particularly where local government is either weak or non-existent as in Haiti, a multifaceted approach involving both Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and government as well as continued management of the funds by USAID, serves as a very useful check on the deficiencies of governmental structures while providing real benefits to the people.

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## Conclusion

The evaluation team judges CGP to be a very successful project in terms of meeting overall U.S. goals and objectives in a most difficult political and economic situation. The effort has enhanced U.S. and multilateral efforts to bring about a political transition in the country while providing real benefits to the Haitian people. On the whole, the managerial achievements of the COP far outweigh its problems. The evaluation team concludes that both the in-country USAID/OTI coordinator as well as the IOM management and field staff involved in the implementation of the program performed with overall excellence. USAID. and OTI especially, now need to build upon this performance both in Haiti and in comparable national political transitions in other parts of the world.

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